

**National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594**

Brief of Accident

Adopted 09/19/2001

SEA01FA001		10/09/2000		LUMMI ISLAND, WA		Aircraft Reg No. N941FE		Time (Local): 09:51 PDT		
Make/Model:		Cessna / 208B						Fatal	Serious	Minor/None
Engine Make/Model:		P&W / PT6A-114				Crew		1	0	0
Aircraft Damage:		Substantial				Pass		0	0	0
Number of Engines:		1								
Operating Certificate(s):		Supplemental; On-demand Air Taxi								
Name of Carrier:		EMPIRE AIRLINES INC.								
Type of Flight Operation:		Non-scheduled; Domestic; Cargo								
Reg. Flight Conducted Under:		Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter								
Last Depart. Point:		BELLINGHAM , WA						Condition of Light:		Day
Destination:		EASTSOUND , WA						Weather Info Src:		Weather Observation Facility
Airport Proximity:		Off Airport/Airstrip						Basic Weather:		Instrument Conditions
								Lowest Ceiling:		500 Ft. AGL, Broken
								Visibility:		2.00 SM
								Wind Dir/Speed:		290 / 006 Kts
								Temperature (°C):		54
								Obstr to Vision:		Fog
								Precipitation:		None
Pilot-in-Command		Age: 67						Flight Time (Hours)		
Certificate(s)/Rating(s)								Total All Aircraft:		8705
Airline Transport; Commercial; Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land; Single-engine Sea; Glider								Last 90 Days:		107
Instrument Ratings								Total Make/Model:		4500
Airplane								Total Instrument Time:		1250

With a reported ceiling of 500 feet and visibility of 2 miles, the pilot requested and received a Special Visual Flight Rules (VFR) clearance to depart the Bellingham airport. He then took off and called clear of Bellingham's Class D airspace. A witness reported seeing the aircraft flying very low over water near the accident site, appearing to go in and out of clouds, and subsequently seeing it turn toward rising wooded terrain and disappear into the clouds. The aircraft crashed shortly thereafter. Witnesses reported very low ceilings and fog in the accident area at the time. Pieces of the aircraft's left wing and left horizontal stabilizer, along with a felled treetop, were found between the location of the witness's sighting and the main crash site, on or near the crest of a hill about 1/4 mile from the main crash site. These pieces exhibited leading-edge and primary structure damage, and leading-edge-embedded plant material, consistent with the pieces separating from the aircraft upon contact with trees. Wreckage and impact signatures at the main crash site were indicative of an uncontrolled impact with the ground. Investigators found no evidence of any aircraft malfunctions or cargo anomalies occurring prior to the apparent tree strikes.

Brief of Accident (Continued)

SEA01FA001

File No. 10519

10/09/2000

LUMMI ISLAND, WA

Aircraft Reg No. N941FE

Time (Local): 09:51 PDT

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - FOG
3. (C) FLIGHT INTO KNOWN ADVERSE WEATHER - ATTEMPTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) ALTITUDE - LOW - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - RISING
6. (F) OBJECT - TREE(S)
7. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

8. WING, WINGTIP - SEPARATION
9. FLIGHT CONTROL, AILERON - SEPARATION
10. HORIZONTAL STABILIZER SURFACE - SEPARATION

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings Legend: (C) = Cause, (F) = Factor

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows.

The pilot's attempted flight into known adverse weather conditions, and his subsequent failure to maintain altitude above, or clearance with, trees. Factors contributing to the accident included low ceilings, fog, the pilot's low-altitude flight, rising terrain, and trees.